Pennsylvania Profiles

by Patrick M. Reynolds

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1884: An ordinary summer in Pittsburgh

The Belles of the Brawl

JULY 7, 1884: MRS. JIMMY **WEEDEN** AND ALICE **BELL** COULDN'T SETTLE AN ARGUMENT PEACEFULLY, SO THEY DECIDED TO ADJOURN TO THE BACKYARD AND FIGHT SIX ROUNDS ACCORDING TO THE LONDON PRIZE RULES. MRS. WEEDEN WAS SECONDED BY HER HUSBAND AND ALICE BY JIMMY GOLDEN, HER FRIEND AND BARTENDER.

AT THE CLOSE OF THE FIFTH ROUND MRS. WEEDEN, LEADING ON POINTS, THREW IN THE SPONGE LEAVING ALICE THE VICTOR.

AFTER THE FIGHT JOHN SHAUGHNESSY, A FRIEND OF MRS. WEEDEN, WENT TO GORDON'S SALOON IN DOWNTOWN PITTSBURGH, QUARRELED WITH THE PROPRIETOR AND WAS KICKED OUT.

ON JULY 9th A GIRL WHO WORKED IN A BAKERY AT 15th & CARSON STREETS WAS AMUSING HERSELF BY SETTING OFF *ANGERS*, A POPULAR FIRECRACKER AT THAT TIME. ONE OF THEM BOUNCED OFF THE FLOOR THROUGH AN OPEN DOOR OF A DISPLAY WINDOW OF FIREWORKS.

SECONDS LATER $100 WORTH OF FIREWORKS EXPLODED. THE WINDOW SHATTERED AND THE BUILDING CAUGHT FIRE. A "BUCKET" BRIGADE SAVED IT FROM TOTAL RUIN.

THE GIRL HAD ESCAPED UNHARMED BY RUNNING OUTSIDE WHEN THE FIRST ROMAN CANDLE WENT OFF.

Bachelors' Lament

TRAVELERS AND SINGLE MEN WHO STAY IN THE CITY CITE PITTSBURGH AS THE "DIRTIEST CITY IN AMERICA" BECAUSE OF THE SCARCITY OF ROOMING HOUSES WITH TURKISH BATHS.

SAID ONE TRAVELER: "MANY A POOR DEVIL IS DRIVEN TO MARRIAGE MORE IN ORDER TO SECURE A HOUSE WITH A BATH ATTACHMENT THAN FOR ANY OTHER REASON."

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The Pennsylvania Profiles Collection

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The Greatest Swimmer of the 20th Century

PETER JOHN WEISSMULLER WAS BORN JUNE 2, 1904 IN WINDBER, SOMERSET COUNTY. SOON AFTERWARD, HIS FAMILY MOVED TO CHICAGO. HE LEARNED HOW TO SWIM AT ABOUT AGE NINE, BUT DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL IN EIGHTH GRADE.

A FEW YEARS LATER, WHILE WORKING AS AN ELEVATOR OPERATOR AND BELLHOP IN THE ILLINOIS ATHLETIC CLUB, WEISSMULLER MET FAMED SWIMMING COACH WILLIAM BACHRACH, WHO TURNED HIM INTO AN OLYMPIC COMPETITOR.

WEISSMULLER BECAME THE FIRST MAN TO SWIM 100 METERS IN LESS THAN A MINUTE. HE WON THREE GOLD MEDALS IN THE 1924 PARIS OLYMPICS.

HE EARNED TWO MORE GOLD MEDALS IN THE '28 OLYMPICS IN AMSTERDAM. SPORTSWRITERS DECLARED HIM THE GREATEST SWIMMER OF THE 20th CENTURY.

DURING THE 1920's HE WON 52 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND SET 67 WORLD RECORDS IN SWIMMING.

WEISSMULLER WAS WORKING OUT IN THE HOLLYWOOD ATHLETIC CLUB IN 1930 WHEN...

THE NOVELIST CYRIL HUME APPROACHED HIM:

I'M WRITING A SCREENPLAY FOR A MOVIE AND WANT YOU TO TRY OUT FOR THE LEAD.

IT'S CALLED "TARZAN, THE APE-MAN."

THE HOOK AND EYE

THE STORY GOES THAT FRANK EMERSON DELONG NOTICED A SERVANT IN HIS HOME IN PHILADELPHIA USING A BIT OF TWISTED WIRE TO CLOSE HER COAT.

HE WORKED THE IDEA INTO ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY USED FASTENERS IN THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY.

WHEN INTRODUCED TO THE PUBLIC IN 1890, SALES WORLD-WIDE WERE PHENOMENAL.

SOON, DELONG HAD HOOK-AND-EYE FACTORIES IN CANADA & PHILADELPHIA. HE ALSO OWNED A LOT OF REAL ESTATE IN PHILLY.

MR. DELONG NEVER FORGOT HIS HOME TOWN. DURING THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930'S HE GAVE WASHINGTONVILLE A RACE TRACK, SWIMMING POOL, AND A SCHOOL, SHOWN HERE. HE NEVER GOT MARRIED.

MR. DELONG DIED FEB. 15, 1939 IN PALM SPRINGS, FLORIDA AFTER SUFFERING A CEREBRAL HEMORHAGE WHILE SWIMMING IN THE SURF.

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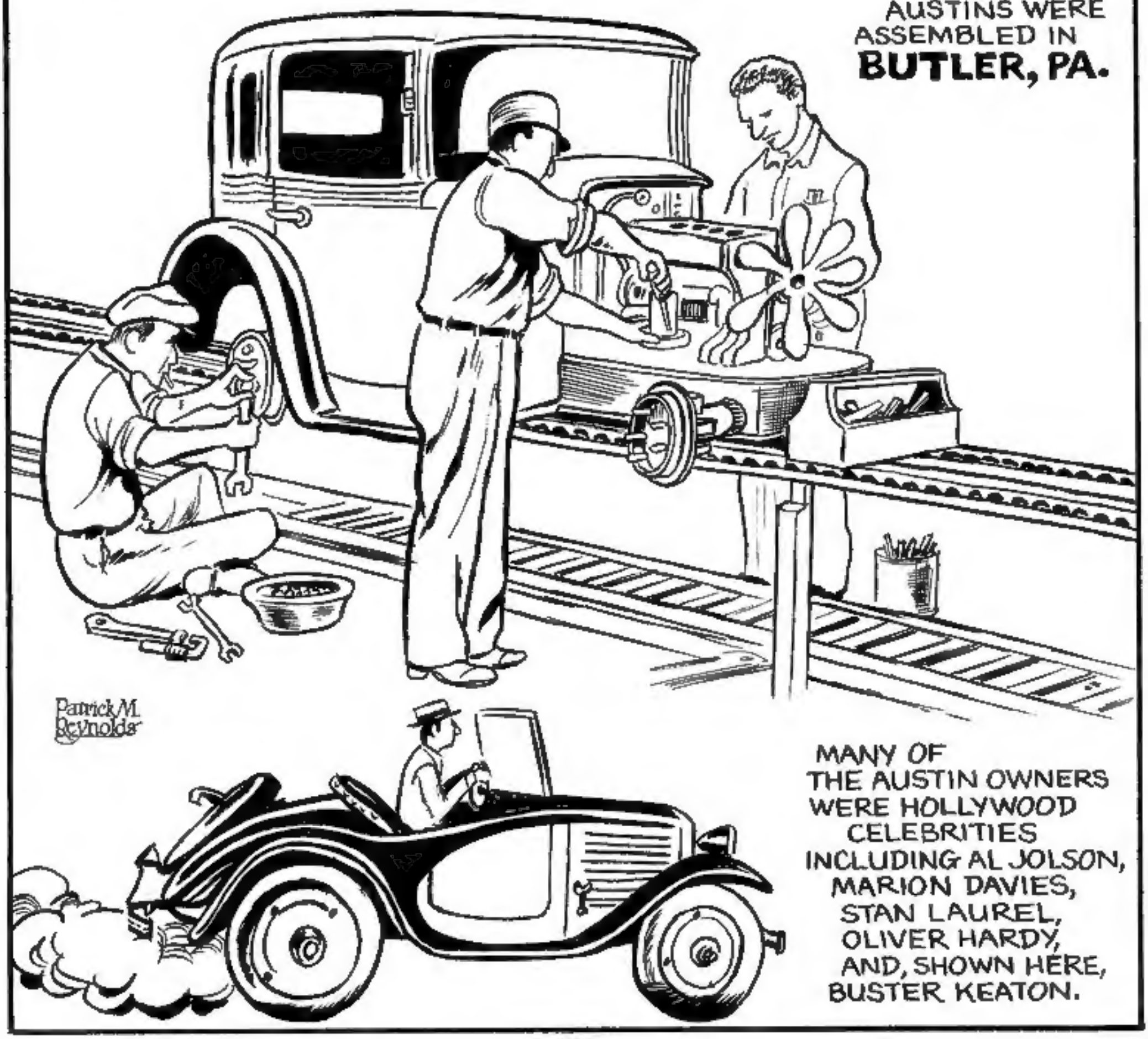
THE AUSTIN AUTOMOBILE

CAME ON THE MARKET IN OCTOBER, 1930 AND SOLD FOR $450 IN THE ROADSTER STYLE AND $550 FOR THE DELUXE COUPE. IT WAS ALMOST THE LOWEST PRICED CAR IN THE COUNTRY.

THIS LITTLE CAR HAD A 75 INCH WHEELBASE; A FOUR CYLINDER, 13 HORSEPOWER ENGINE; AND A FIVE GALLON GAS TANK.

AUSTINS WERE ASSEMBLED IN **BUTLER, PA.**



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MANY OF THE AUSTIN OWNERS WERE HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES INCLUDING AL JOLSON, MARION DAVIES, STAN LAUREL, OLIVER HARDY, AND, SHOWN HERE, BUSTER KEATON.

IN 1847, JOHN SINGER, HIS WIFE, AND FOUR CHILDREN WERE

SHIPWRECKED

ON PADRE ISLAND. THEY BUILT A HOUSE AND CORRAL FROM THE SHIP'S WRECKAGE, MOST OF WHICH WAS MAHOGANY.

THE SINGERS WERE FINANCIALLY WELL OFF. MRS. SINGER WAS WEALTHY IN HER OWN RIGHT AND JOHN OWNED PART OF HIS BROTHER ISAAC'S SEWING MACHINE COMPANY.

THE ISLAND TEEMED WITH WILD DEER, CATTLE, AND HORSES. SOON, THE SINGERS HAD AN IMMENSE HERD OF CATTLE AND PUT THEIR BRAND ON OVER 1,500 CALVES A YEAR.

The Treasure of Padre Island

AFTER SETTLING ON PADRE ISLAND IN 1847, JOHN SINGER AND HIS FAMILY BECAME EXPERTS AT SALVAGING SHIPS WHICH WRECKED NEAR THE ISLAND DURING SEVERE WEATHER. WITHIN A DECADE THEY HAD AMASSED A SMALL FORTUNE IN GOLD, SILVER, AND JEWELS.

WHEN THE CIVIL WAR STARTED IN 1861, THE CONFEDERATES ORDERED THE SINGERS TO GO BACK WHERE THEY CAME FROM IN NEW YORK.

BEFORE LEAVING JOHN BURIED $80,000 IN GOLD, SILVER, AND GEMS AT A PLACE KNOWN AS *MONEY HILL*, SIX MILES NORTH OF SANTA CRUZ ON THE LAGUNA MADRE SIDE OF THE ISLAND.

What ever happened to the treasure?

THE SINGER FAMILY'S RANCH ON PADRE ISLAND REMAINED DESERTED DURING THE CIVIL WAR. OCCASIONALLY, YANKEE TROOPS CAME ASHORE, SLAUGHTERED ALL THE SINGER'S CATTLE, AND DESTROYED THE RANCH BUILDINGS.

OVER THE YEARS, STORMS BLEW DOWN THE TREES THAT MARKED THE SITE WHERE JOHN SINGER BURIED $80,000 IN GOLD AND SILVER.

LATER, THE SINGERS RETURNED BRIEFLY TO PADRE ISLAND, BUT NEVER COULD FIND THEIR TREASURE.